

# **Children and Youth at Risk of or Experiencing Juvenile Justice Involvement**

**Presented by**  
**Mark Amendola L.S.W.**  
**Executive Director**  
**Perseus House, Inc.**  
**April 2, 2008**

# Webcast Overview

- Framework for understanding aggression
- Extrafamilial and family risk factors
- Individual risk factors
- Protective factors
- From research to practice – Teaching Prosocial Skills
- Model programs sites

# Evidence-Based Approaches

- **Model Approach**
  - Programs that demonstrate rigor in their outcome protocols that include randomization of client selection.
  - Also includes longitudinal impact of practice.
- **Promising Approach**
  - Programs that demonstrate effective outcomes relative to the amount of time a participant is engaged in the program.

# Meta-analysis of What Works

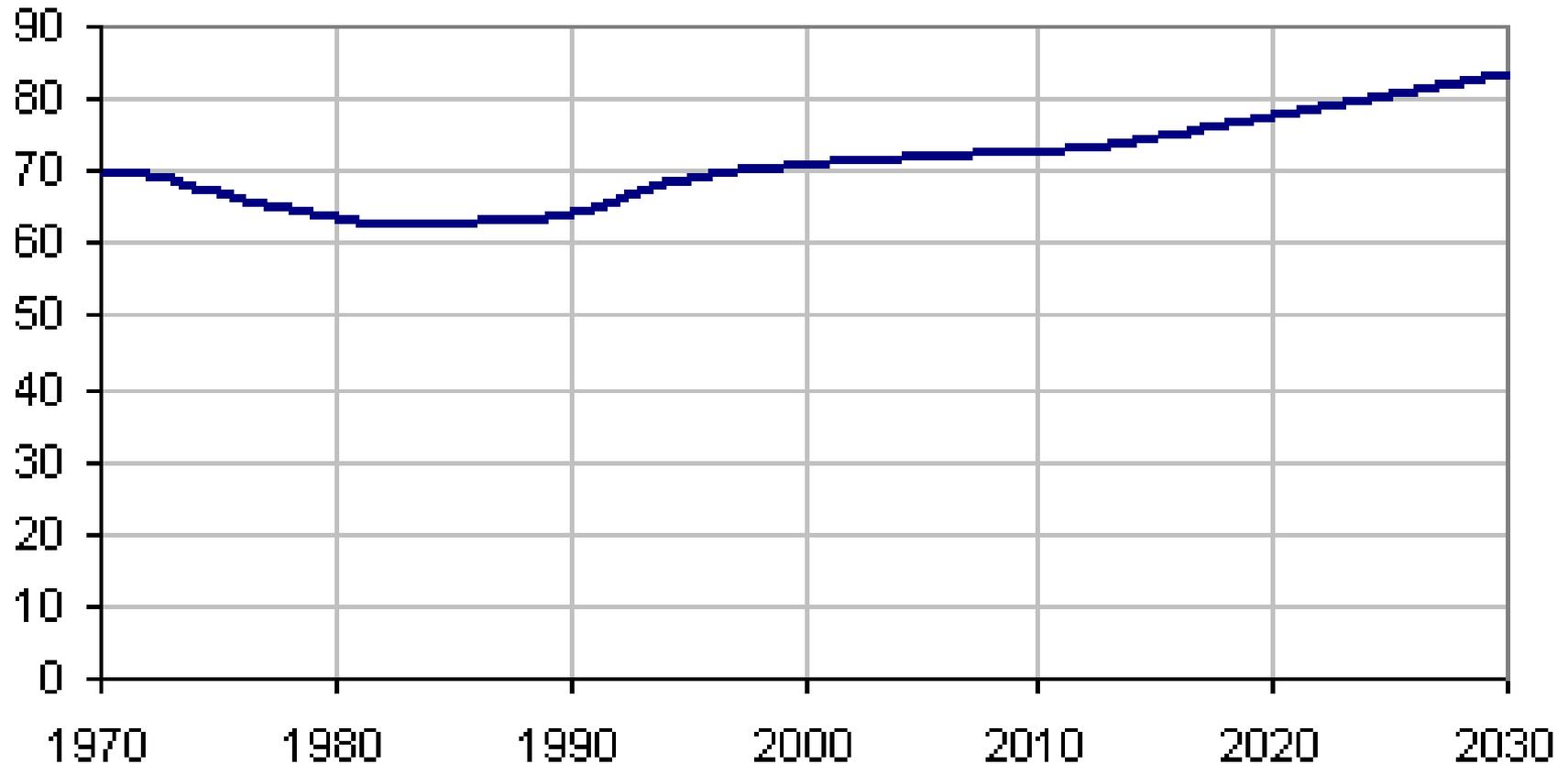
Quality institutional programs that treat youths humanely and that are operated by caring and professional staff who use therapeutic, cognitive-behavioral, and skill-building interventions are effective at reducing recidivism for serious juvenile offenders.

**Lipsey and Wilson (1998)**

# Persons under age 18

(U.S. Dept. of Census, 2005)

Persons under age 18, 1970-2030 (in millions)



# Where America Stands

Among 25 Industrialized countries, the United States ranks:

- 1<sup>st</sup> In gross domestic product.
- 1<sup>st</sup> In the number of millionaires and billionaires.
- 1<sup>st</sup> In health technology.
- 1<sup>st</sup> In military technology.
- 1<sup>st</sup> In military exports.
- 1<sup>st</sup> In defense spending.
- 10<sup>th</sup> In eighth-grade science scores.
- 16<sup>th</sup> In living standards among the poorest one-fifth of children.
- 17<sup>th</sup> In rates of low birth weight births.
- 18<sup>th</sup> In the income gap between rich and poor children.
- 18<sup>th</sup> In infant mortality.
- 21<sup>st</sup> In eighth-grade math scores.
- Last In protecting our children against gun violence.

# Where America Stands

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
U.S. children under age 15 are...

- 12 times more likely to die from gunfire,
- 16 times more likely to be murdered by a gun,
- 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun, and
- 9 times more likely to die in a firearm accident

...than children in 25 other industrialized  
countries combined.

# ***The Associated Press (AP)***

***9-13-2005***

- ***Out of 25 industrialized countries, United States is 9<sup>th</sup> in the share of its population that has at least a high school degree.***
- ***United States is 7<sup>th</sup> in the share of people who hold a college degree.***
- ***By both measures, the U.S. was 1<sup>st</sup> in the world as recently as 20 years ago.***

# Key Facts About American Children Children's Defense Fund, 2005

- 3 in 5 Preschoolers have mothers in the labor force.
- 1 in 2 Will live in a single-parent family at some point in childhood.
- 1 in 2 Never completes a single year of college.
- 1 in 3 Is born to unmarried parents.
- 1 in 3 Is a year or more behind in school.
- 1 in 5 Is born poor.
- 1 in 5 Is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school.
- 1 in 4 Lives with only one parent.
- 1 in 6 Is poor now.
- 1 in 8 Lives in a family receiving food stamps.
- 1 in 6 Is born to a mother who received no prenatal care in the first three months of pregnancy.
- 1 in 6 Has a foreign-born mother.

Continued

# The Working Poor

Percentage of poor families with children headed by someone who worked during the year

Work does not guarantee that families will escape poverty. A large and growing proportion of poor families with children are headed by someone who works.

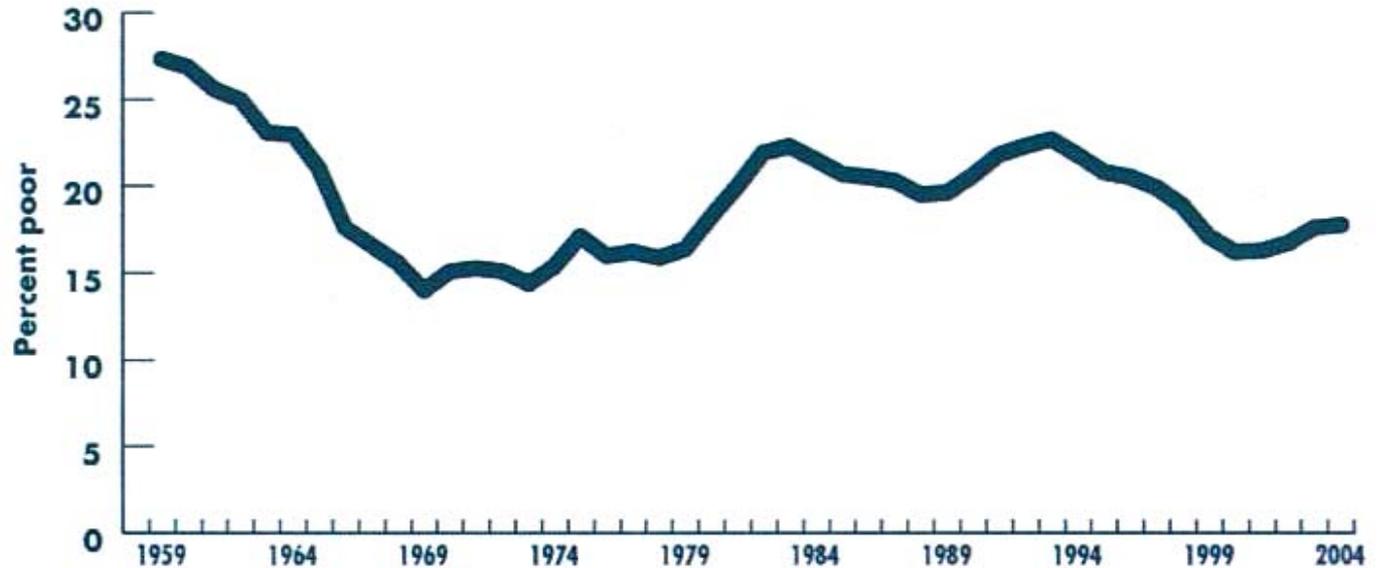


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund

## Child Poverty, 1959-2004

---

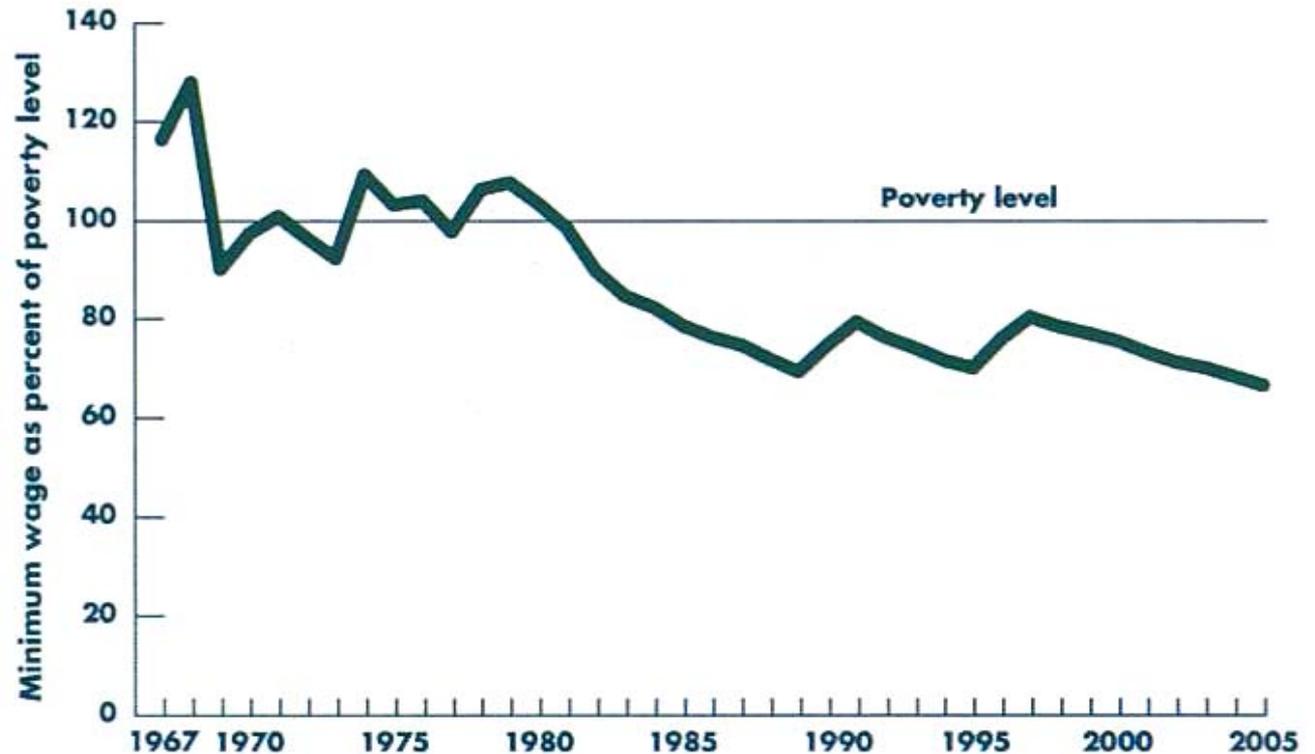
In America today, a child is as likely to be poor as s/he was almost four decades ago.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

## Minimum Wage<sup>1</sup> vs. Poverty Level<sup>2</sup>, 1967-2005

A parent of two children who works full-time, year-round at the federal minimum wage does not earn enough to lift his/her family out of poverty.



<sup>1</sup>Minimum wage is calculated for full-time, year-round employment (2080 hours per year). The federal minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour) is used; some states have a higher minimum wage.

<sup>2</sup>Poverty level for a three-person family

Source: U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

# 2007 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$10,210	\$12,770	\$11,750
2	13,690	17,120	15,750
3	17,170	21,470	19,750
4	20,650	25,820	23,750
5	24,130	30,170	27,750
6	27,610	34,520	31,750
7	31,090	38,870	35,750
8	34,570	43,220	39,750
For each additional person, add	3,480	4,350	4,000

# Theories of Aggression



# Aggressive Behavior Can Take Many Forms

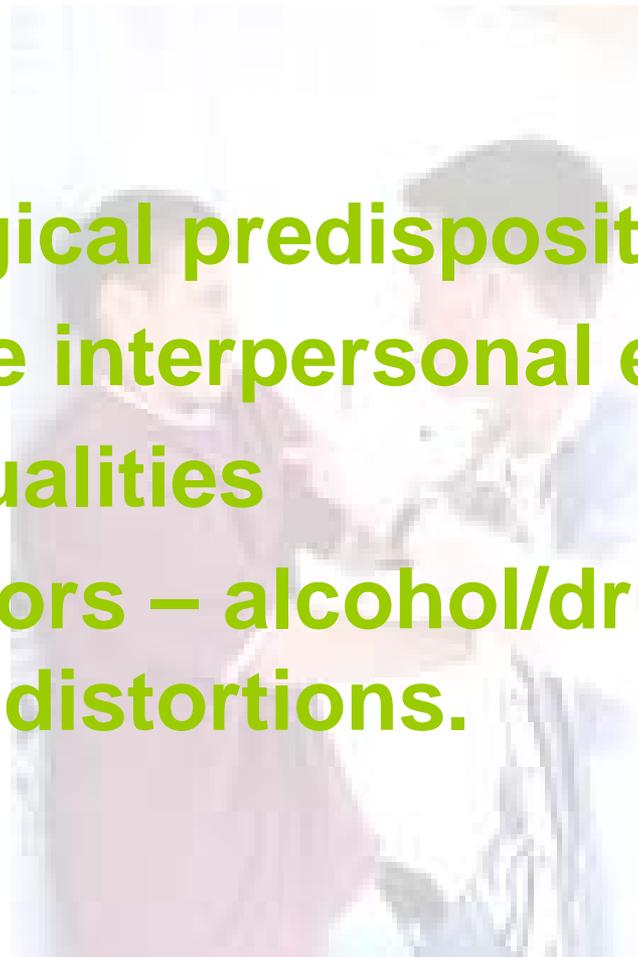
- Physical Aggression
- Verbal Aggression
- Relational Aggression
  - Includes such behaviors as gossiping, spreading cruel rumors, and encouraging others to reject or exclude someone.



# Multiple Causes of Aggressive Behavior

## Causes

- **Physiological predisposition**
- **Immediate interpersonal environment**
- **Person qualities**
- **Disinhibitors – alcohol/drug use, cognitive distortions.**



# Multiple Causes of Aggressive Behavior

## Examples

- Male gender, high arousal, temperament
- Parental/peer criminality, video, live models
- Self-control, repertoire of prosocial values/behaviors
- Alcohol, drugs, successful aggressive models

# Violent Games May Affect Brain Activity

(USA Today 6- 23-04)

- Research by the Radiological Society of North America @ Indiana School of Medicine in Indianapolis.
- Studied brain activity of teens ages 13-17, half of whom were diagnosed with disruptive behavior disorder (DBD).
- MRI's showed reduced brain activity in the frontal lobe (controlling thinking, learning, reasoning and emotions).

# Coercive Parenting

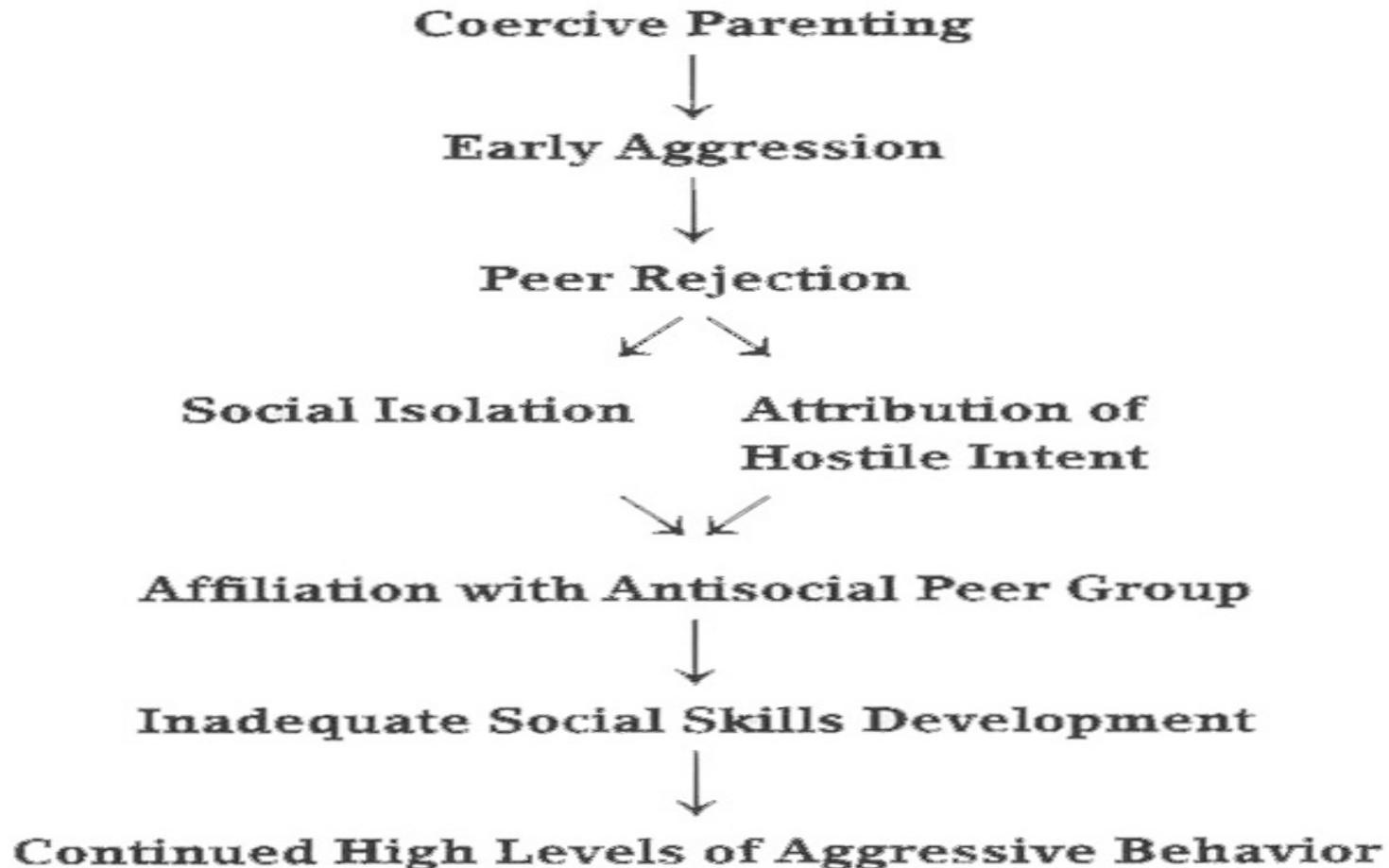
---

- **Frequent, vague commands**
- **Low levels of warmth, involvement, empathy**
- **Strict and lax monitoring of child's behavior**
- **Nattering**
  - Empty threats
  - Pleading
  - Nagging
  - Scolding
- **Threatening, yelling, corporal punishment**
  - High frequency
  - Noncontingent
- **Start-ups, counterattacks, escalation of conflicts**
- **Inconsistent reaction after escalation**
  - Giving in
  - Exploding
- **Negative reinforcement of child's coerciveness**

Patterson, Et Al , (1992,Portland, Ore)

# **Development of Aggression in Childhood**

---



# Benefits of Managing Anger

- You won't hurt anybody.
- Other people will like and help you.
- You won't get into trouble.
- You will feel better.
- You will feel stronger.

# Thinking Errors

Any cognitions that .....

- Rationalize
- Justify or minimize behavior

# Anger-Arousing Thinking Errors

- **Self-Centeredness**
  - *“What are you looking at?!”*
- **Attribution of Hostile Intent**
  - *“He’s trying to make me look like a wimp.”*
- **Mislabeling**
  - *“I have to defend myself.”*
- **Assuming the Worst**
  - *“If I don’t hit him, I’m a wimp.”*
- **Blaming Others**
  - *“He’s asking for it.”*

# Constantly evaluate each client's:

## COGNITIVE ABILITY

low.....high

## EMOTIONAL ABILITY

low.....high

## SOCIAL ABILITY

low.....high

The level of the client's ability will have a strong influence on their coping skills

# ***Social Neuro Science***

John Cacioppo & Gary Bertston

....our social interactions play a role in re-shaping our brain through ***neuroplasticity.....***

....our repeated experiences sculpt the shape, size and number of neurons and their synaptic connectedness.

# Questions

- Any questions at this time?

# “Risks” defined

- .....processes that predispose individuals to specific negative or unwanted outcomes.

# Extrafamilial Risk Factors

- Growing up poor
- Peer rejection
- Peer group and gang influences on rejected youth
- Low quality Day care and preschool experiences
- After-school care with poor supervision
- School failure

# Family Risk Factors

- Parental practices and styles
- Parental monitoring
- Influence of siblings
- Parental psychopathology
- Child maltreatment
- Divorce, separation & desertion\family size and birth order

# Individual Risk Factors

- Social
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Biological

# Social

- Aggressive behavior
- Troublesome behavior

# Cognitive

- Language delay impairment
- Limited cognitive constructs
- Hostile attribution bias

# Emotional

- Anger
- Lack of empathy
- Cruelty to animals

# Biological

- Physical development
- Temperament
- Genetics
- Psychophysiology
- Health
- Brain development

# “Protective” defined

- ....those cognitive, social, or emotional influences and experiences that serve to moderate, buffer or insulate against risk.

# “Protective” cont.....

- Resilience – must have been exposed to significant threats, & must demonstrate the achievement of positive despite major assaults on the developmental process.

# Environmental Factors

- Connections to competent and caring adults.
- Cognitive and self regulation skills.
- Positive views of self.
- Motivation to be successful in the environment.

# Peer Influences

- Those children who have been rejected for at least 2-3 years by the time they reached 2<sup>nd</sup> grade had a 50% chance of displaying significant antisocial behavior in contrast to 9% who managed to avoid early peer rejection.
- Supportive, prosocial peers are the most important factors contributing to resilience in children.

# Family Influences

- Firm and consistent balanced discipline.
- Good family communication.
- Young children who are read to on a regular basis generally demonstrate better cognitive ability.

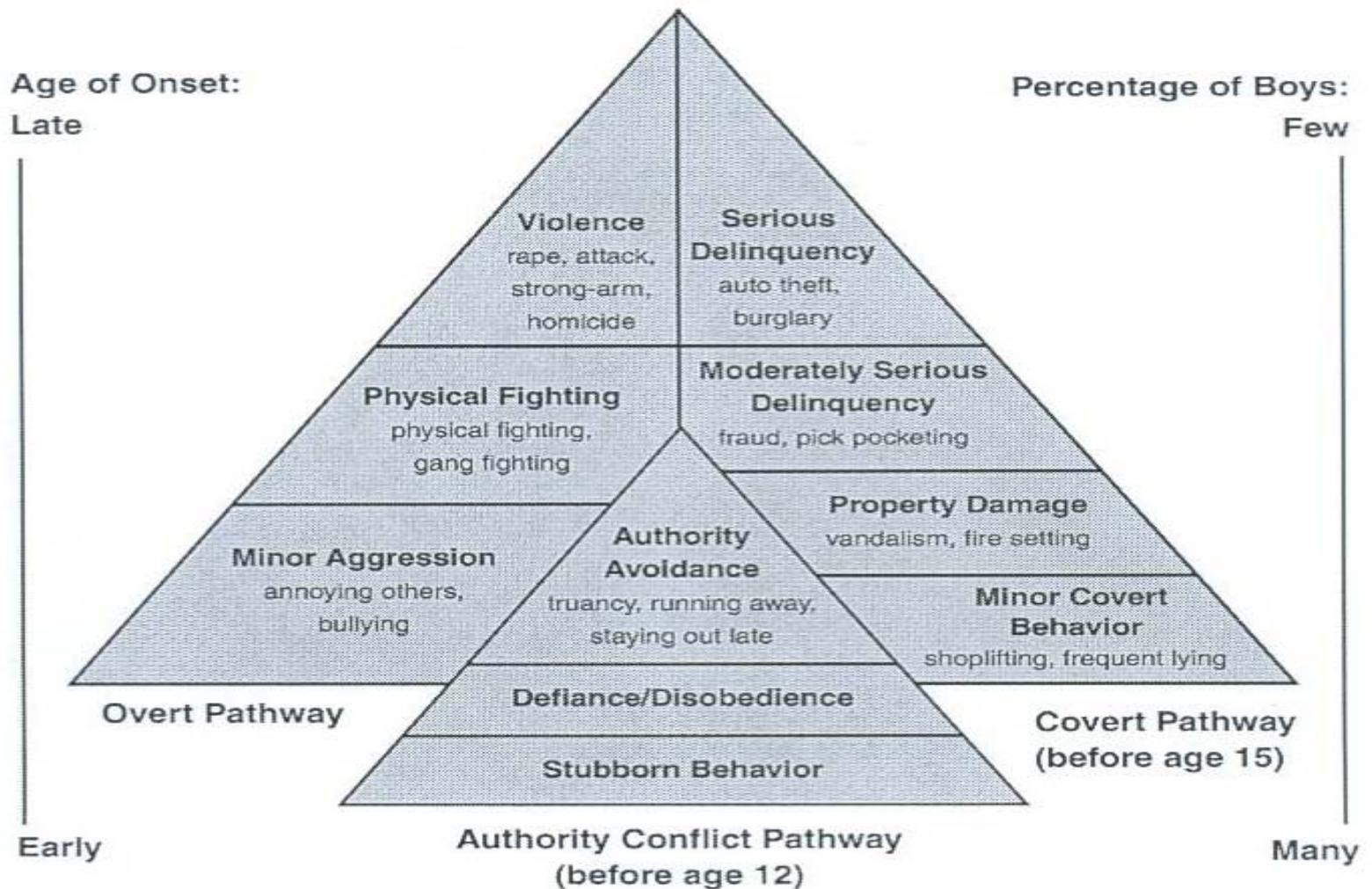
# Individual Factors

- Intelligence
- Language development
- Self-regulation skills
- Executive functions
- Positive emotions
- Self-esteem
- Motivational factors
- Biological factors

# Assessment of resilience

- Critical support in family, school & community
- Positive self-identity and self-esteem
- Academic achievement
- Coping skills and self-control
- Communication & social competence skills
- Religious faith (or alternative value system) that provides moral guidance

Figure 1: Developmental Pathways to Serious and Violent Offending



# Implications for Prevention



- Average age of first step in any of the pathways:  
**-7 years**

# Implications for Prevention

- Beginning of moderately serious problem behavior:

**-9.5 years**



# Implications for Prevention



- **Serious delinquency:**  
**-12 years**

# Implications for Prevention

- **First contact with juvenile court:**  
**-14.5 years**



# Implications for Prevention

Thus, approximately **7.5** years elapsed between the earliest emergence of disruptive behavior and the first contact with the juvenile court.





***Although it is “never too early” for prevention efforts, it is also “never too late” for intervention to attempt to reduce the risk of recidivism.***

**Loeber and Farrington, 1998**

# Prevention Program Components

1. All are theory-based.
2. Written curriculum and trainer
3. Multiple-component interventions are especially promising.
4. Specific behavior goals are targeted.
5. Skill-based components are central.

# Questions

- Any questions at this time?

# **Teaching ProSocial Skills (TPS)**

**Based on the Evidence-Based Curriculum  
Aggression  
Replacement Training ®  
(Goldstein, Glick & Gibbs, 1998)**

# art

## **Aggression Replacement Training**

**REVISED EDITION**

*A Comprehensive Intervention  
for Aggressive Youth*

**Arnold P. Goldstein**

**Barry Glick**

**John C. Gibbs**

# Evidence-Based

- **Promising Approach**
  - **Dept. of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools**
- **Model Approach**
  - **U.S. Dept. of Corrections**

# Aggression Replacement Training

(Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs, 1998)

- **Skillstreaming**
  - (the behavioral component)
    - Teaches what to do.
- **Anger Control Training**
  - (the emotional component)
    - Teaches what not to do.
- **Moral Reasoning Training**
  - (the values component)
    - Teaches why to use the skills

# ART® Summary

- **Strong theoretical base**
- **Grounded in broad models of violence**
- **Specific applicability for practitioners**
- **Broad empirical support for both theory and method**
- **Specific support for ART**

# Skillstreaming the **Adolescent**

REVISED EDITION

*New Strategies  
and Perspectives  
for Teaching  
Prosocial Skills*

**Arnold P. Goldstein  
Ellen McGinnis**



# Skillstreaming

- **Skillstreaming**
  - **psycho educational approach**
  - **teaching an array of pro-social skills**
- **Small groups of trainees with shared pro-social deficiencies are:**
  - **shown several examples of expert use of the behaviors constituting the skills in which they are weak or lacking (modeling)**
  - **given several guided opportunities to practice and rehearse these interpersonal behaviors (role-playing)**

# Skillstreaming (cont.)

- provided with the praise, reinstruction, and related feedback on how well their role-playing of the skill matched the expert model's portrayal of it (performance feedback); and
- encouraged to engage in a series of activities designed to increase the chance that skills learned in the training setting will endure and be available for use when needed in the school, home, community, institution, or other real-world setting (transfer training)

# Anger Control Training

- **Designed to serve two related purposes:**
  - **To help make the arousal of anger in chronically aggressive youth a less frequent occurrence, and**
  - **To provide such youths with the means to learn self-control when their anger is aroused**

# Moral Reasoning Training

- **In order to be effective, treatment programs for antisocial youth must have a moral component**

**(Gibbs, Potter, & Goldstein, 1995)**

- **Assist youth who have significant sociomoral developmental delay, to develop more mature social perspective-taking within interpersonal relationships**

# The PREPARE Curriculum

REVISED EDITION

Teaching  
PROSOCIAL  
Competencies

ARNOLD P. GOLDSTEIN

new  
**perspectives**  
on aggression  
replacement training



**practice, research, and application**

Edited by  
**Arnold P. Goldstein, Rune Nensén, Bengt Daleflod  
and Mikael Kalt**

*f* Wiley Series in  
Forensic Clinical  
Psychology

# Model Program Sites

- Northwestern Elementary, Albion, Pennsylvania.
- Edison Elementary, Erie, Pennsylvania.
- Prince William School District, Prince William, Maryland.

# Implementation and Training Information on TPS

- **Specific information presented by Will Rhett-Mariscal**

# CONTACT INFORMATION

- Mark Amendola
- Perseus House, Inc.
- 1511 Peach St.
- Erie, Pa. 16501
- 814-881-2439
- [mamendola@perseushouse.org](mailto:mamendola@perseushouse.org)
- [www.perseushouse.org](http://www.perseushouse.org)
- [www.uscart.org](http://www.uscart.org)
- [www.aggressionreplacementtraining.org](http://www.aggressionreplacementtraining.org)